

# Community Building Summit

The Riverside Hotel

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Presented by Pat Wagner, Pattern Research, Inc.



## *Handout for May 21*

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“... haunted by an ever-present longing for community ...  
an irresistible need for communication with each other.”

-William H. Willimon and Thomas H. Naylor  
*The Abandoned Generation: Rethinking Higher Education*

A **community** is a place where people are seriously concerned about each other's well-being and act on those feelings. On the other hand, a **village or tribe** is where everyone is concerned first about who are *them* (outsiders), and who are *us* (insiders), before they decide who deserves a smile and a hand.

A **civilization** is a place that creates safety for the stranger, with a minimum of meaningful, fair-handed rules, grounded in reality. Civil order keeps community from turning into ugly villages and individuals from burning out while trying to help each other. Civil order creates a workplace where boundaries are respected, and work gets done. A foundation of civilization helps grow villages beyond their limits and into communities. Civilization is sometimes counter-intuitive; it keeps our instinctive responses from turning into bigotry. On the other hand, a **bureaucracy** is a place where the rules become the goals.

**Community** is where the expectation is that if something is needed, someone can be found who will have the right answer. In community, we feel resourceful. It is where generosity is taken for granted and the sweetness of ordinary obligation provides structure and meaning. A community takes up the worst of the burdens of life on its own shoulders.

**Community** is where success is measured by different criteria from that of the bottom line. The corporate model can be a dangerous model to use in the public and nonprofit sectors; it can distract participants from truths that can't be counted.

**Community** moves at the speed of heartbeat and breath, of that of a slow stroll through a rose garden. It stops to feed the birds, pick up trash, close an open gate, and pull a blanket over the shoulders of a sleeping child. It stops, and asks, "How are you," over and over again, and never gets tired of hearing the same stories, over and over again.

Creating and sustaining **community** is not without cost. The price is looking into the face of everyone you meet and saying "hello" as if you mean it. You have to pay attention to more than just your own stuff, your own needs, your own dreams, your own successes and failures, your own personal and professional space. It means compromise and putting up with the mediocrity of the crowd, sometimes. It means a loss of privacy; your pain is known; your joy is known; your self is known. It means that sometimes you are not going to win, because you have given up winning.

**Community** is the created family, the village without xenophobia, the "us and us" of public life, a constant reunion of the practical, and the spiritual.

**Community is the hello to everyone, the gift that is on the recipient's terms, the shared work, forgiveness, and celebration.**

# Specific Strategies for Community-Building

1. Everyone in your library has “internal and external community-building” as part of their job description. Everyone.
2. No one ever gets “punished” for going outside whatever boundaries are set regarding whom the organization is “speaking to” or which organizations are on the “acceptable” list.
3. Even regarding an organization with which you can’t possibly work, find one person with whom you can have a reciprocal relationship.
4. Even with a person with whom you can’t possibly do business, find one facet of that person which you have in common and about which you can chat at length, even if it is something that is not very important.
5. Play “what if” a lot. Be willing to dream out loud about possibilities all the time and with everyone, even if only the tiniest percentage ever comes to fruition.
6. If you are in a leadership position, give your staff more and more important work to do, so they can feel like full community-builders in the mission of the library. Assume your job is to grow leaders and to coax the genius out of all of the people with whom you work.
7. Keep a permanent personal and professional database. Find ways to keep in touch with people and invest in your relationships with them.
8. Do unto others as they prefer to be done to.

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# Creating Community

1. Begin with empathy and humility. Assume the people you are try to reach are your peers, not inferiors to lift up.
2. The library is not the center of their lives. They already have full lives? What will the library do to benefit them on their terms?
3. Partner from the very beginning, not when you need something from them. Partnering should start when you are planning to plan.
4. People from the target audience should make up at least the committee or group putting together the program, and they should have decision-making powers.
5. If you are serious about recruiting community members, and they turn you down, look at how you asked them, and how you structured meetings. For example, do you want to serve working-class people, but the meetings are held only when they work? Is there transportation? Daycare? Food?
6. Each time you host a program about community, invite everyone you can. Keep asking whom you have forgotten.
7. Each person in the room will know more than you do more about some aspect of the subject. Create opportunities for everyone to speak, not just the leadership or people with formal credentials, education, and experience. Everyone.
8. Create opportunities for participants to speak to and help each other. Everyone.

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9. Encourage different community members to run the presentations each time. Do not allow community to be limited to one committee or department.
10. If you leave the meeting room and people don't notice, you have done a successful job eliciting community.
11. Human beings have many facets. The more facets that can be touched and engaged in thought, word and deed by other people, the more likely that there will be the creation of community.
12. People need overwhelming meaning in their lives, but that in itself might not be enough to create a community that can sustain itself. Otherwise, there is only one connection, albeit large, with other people, and the community is likely to be more like a cult or despotism. This is the great danger and contradiction of single-minded community causes.
13. There must be a high level of reciprocity among the participants. Beware having community run by a very few generous people.
14. Community requires a higher degree of public life, where people are willing to talk with each other and reveal themselves to each other. For some people, community makes them feel naked. Not everyone needs the same level of disclosure, however.
15. Community is built in the informal more than in the formal; otherwise, people start replacing the I-Thou (Buber) with committee meetings.
16. Ritual and structure can strengthen community, but they are not, in themselves, community.
17. Community is built on the daily actions of most participants.
18. You know each other's stories and act on that knowledge.

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19. Community does not have to be based on proximity. Scholars and merchants, e.g., have shared virtual communities for centuries before there was an Internet.
20. After “you are one of us,” something more must happen.
21. Community is tested in crisis.
22. Workplace communities are fragile, because of the realities of the marketplace. However, friendships can help sustain community.
23. Community is how people interact when they don't have to.
24. Community is modeled by the leadership every day and with every person. A good “politician” runs for office every day.
25. Communities have hierarchies, but the more ways that every person has the opportunity to lead, has status, has been seen as a peer of the top people, has been a top person in some facet of life, etc., the more likely the community will survive.
26. A group where one person pays the bills is not a community. Allocation of resources impacts community-building. In library communities, this means being careful of having one small group of prosperous or assertive people with a financial stake in a project, such as the building or foundation.
27. Community dies when more than a very few people are not giving. The danger comes much sooner than most people think.

# Five Rules for Building Community Relationships

1. A network is an array of useful relationships.
2. The art of networking is the art of exchanging useful ideas and information among individuals for mutual benefit.
3. The art of network building is the art of designing, building, and maintaining these networks of relationships.

## The Five Rules of Networking:

1. Be Useful to others on their terms and allow them to be useful to you.
2. Don't Be Boring. Abstain from loading others down with too much data, from exploiting them, and from not letting them be useful to you.
3. Listen. Think about what the other person is saying, not what you are going to say. Seek out people with whom you don't agree; listen to them.
4. Ask Questions and plan to be surprised by the answer.
5. Play the Wild Card! The least likely person can have the answer to your question and you can be useful to the least likely person.

*A weaver is someone who sees patterns and makes connections,  
and then creates their own patterns.*

# Who is in Your Own Networks?

**Personal Networks:** Relatives, friends, neighbors, parents of your children's friends, tradespersons and service people (doctor, dry cleaner, cobbler, baker, yoga instructor, dog walker, gardener, housesitter), teachers, high school and college friends, fellow hobbyists, hobby and sports clubs members, friends from personal religious and political activities.

**Professional Networks:** Colleagues at current and previous jobs, your peers at government, nonprofit and private sector institutions, members of the media, other librarians, managers, clergy, private citizens, academics, members of think tanks, property owners, ranchers, developers, farmers, business owners, and degreed professionals.

## Types of Networks

**Networks of Geography:** Neighbors, roommates, people who work down the hall or in the same building or on the same campus or on the same block or on the same street. The people who live in the neighborhood of your workplace, or in your town, county, state, region, country.

**Networks of Intention:** Elected and appointed officials, members of task forces and community groups, members of citizens' groups, members of political parties, members of movements and action committees.

**Networks of Interest:** Members of professional associations, clubs and conferences, people who subscribe and read the same magazines and play the same sports, people with children the same age, people with the same disease, people who have lived through the same difficult experience.

**Networks of World View:** Followers of the same guru, practitioners of the same religion or spiritual path, people who speak the same language or

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who identify with the same ethnic group, people whose families came from the same part of the world, people who share your philosophy concerning politics, education, or the supremacy of the Chicago Cubs.

**And how about...**Salespeople, police officers, receptionists and secretaries, postal carriers, kids, the person in front of you in line at the grocery store, the person next to you on the plane or bus, your waitperson, your worst enemy, your best friend, your childhood crush.

**The people most overlooked:** Your parents, people who you don't like, people who you are in awe of, people who you don't know, people who you were told about years ago, people who make less money than you or who don't have your education or credentials, and those with superior money, education, and credentials.

**The people we tend to exclude:** The Others: people who you perceive are on the other side of important issues, people who vote differently than you do, people who have different ideas about: abortion, public school curricula, birth control, freedom of speech, sex, gun control, capital punishment, cats, trade laws, books, vitamins, music, how to raise children, taxes, the role of women, the Internet, the role of men, the United Nations, hunting, and nuclear power. And, people who live in the wrong city or state, people with the wrong religious ideas, people who work for the wrong employers, people who eat the wrong things, people who disagree with us. People are obviously just wrong.

# The Importance of Precision

## Respect, and other words that have no meaning

One skill that can ensure effective communication is the ability to talk about specific behavior in a precise manner. For example, many people who are unhappy about how they are being treated by their supervisors will say they want “respect”. By using the word “respect”, they are not giving the other party specific information. Here are some specific requests for “respectful” behavior.

1. “I want you to address me by my name, instead of ‘Hey you!’”
2. “I want to be introduced to visitors to the library.”
3. “I want to be invited to budget meetings at least once a month.”
4. “I want to have your attention without your interrupting our conversations in your office to take phone calls.”
5. “I want you to let me finish my sentences.”
6. “I want to see some of my ideas implemented or know the reasons why they not being used.”
7. “I want to be included in decision-making that affects my job.”
8. “I want to be *asked* to stay late, not told.”
9. “I want the rules to apply to everyone in the library equally.”
10. “I want you to be quiet and look at me when I am giving presentations in team meetings.”
11. “I want a turn running staff meetings.”
12. “I want you to give me criticism about my work in private, not in front of my team members.”
13. “I want you to say hello to me every day.”
14. “I want to be given more difficult projects.”

## Sensory–Specific Details

Pick an intangible “attitude” for your small group to work on that you want someone to demonstrate in a workplace such as:

- Good work ethic
- Service-oriented
- Professional
- Team-oriented
- Leadership
- Work-appropriate
- Supportive

Please describe how *exactly* a library employee might demonstrate that would indicate to the average observer this attitude. For example, if you wanted someone to demonstrate that he or she was a leader, you might ask them to volunteer to run for office in the state library association or medical library association chapter. Each person should write at least five examples, and then compare and discuss with your small group members what you wrote. The behavior should be based on something you could see or hear, not what the person thinks or feels.

# Nonverbal Standards for Personal Influence

1. The expression on your face, do you...
  - a. Smile with your whole face, just your mouth, or rarely.
  - b. Have a smooth or furrowed brow.
  - c. Have a face that is expressive (moving), or blank and still.
  - d. Look positive: happy, confident, or negative: frowning, squinting.
  - e. Look the person in the face and maintain eye contact, if appropriate.
2. Sitting posture, do you...
  - a. Lean slightly forward, totally erect, or slouched backward.
  - b. Turn your shoulders towards or away from the other person.
  - c. Sit mostly still, or shift in your chair continually.
3. Standing posture, do you...
  - a. Lean slightly forward, totally erect, or slouched
  - b. Turn towards or away from the other person
  - c. Stand mostly still, or shift your weight and move constantly.
4. Hand gestures, do you...
  - a. Use some hand gestures, never gesture, or gesture wildly
  - b. Point at the person.
  - c. Sit mostly still, or move your hands constantly.
5. Do you focus on your task, rather than the person in front of you.

# Words That Work

1. Replace, “Yes, but...” with “Yes, and...”
2. Replace, “I don’t know.” with “Let me find out.”
3. Replace, “I can’t.” with “What I can do is...”
4. Replace, “We can’t do that.” with “What I can do is...”
5. Replace, “We can’t do that.” with “Here is the address and phone number of the agency that offers that service.”
6. Replace, “You make me feel.” with “I feel...”
7. Replace, “You must...” with “Would you please...”
8. Replace, “I will help you in a minute” with “I will be finished with this person in ten minutes. Would you like to wait, come back, find help at another desk, or have me call you after a specific length of time?”
9. Replace, “I will try” with the smaller, specific thing you will actually do.
10. Replace, “You are wrong.” with, “This is the information I have, and here is the document I am using as my source. Please tell me more about what you know, so I can better understand your perspective.”
11. Use power words:
  - a. Next: Next time, please tell me first when the computer is down.
  - b. Instead: What reports do you want instead of the ones we have?
  - c. Despite: Despite the mistake about the hours, what are you going to do?
  - d. Satisfy: What will satisfy your concerns about the evaluations?
12. Focus on the other person:
  - a. Focus on their desired outcomes (the future), not just your own resources (present) or their problems (the past).
  - b. Be specific; avoid generalities.
  - c. Say what can be done, instead of what can’t be done.
  - d. Your nonverbal communication - your smile, tone of voice, and posture - will build rapport and thus, better outcomes.
13. Bad news is the best information; learn from miscommunication.

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# Negative (And Sometimes Addictive) Behaviors

1. Generalizations: always, never, all, every.
2. Repeating the same negative stories or information more than once in the same conversation.
3. Repeating the same old stories in response to new information.
4. Assuming the worst of the people you don't like.
5. Ignoring or not being able to see and hear positive change.
6. Your first response is to criticize or say something negative.
7. Feeling as if feeling good means you have lost the battle.
8. Equating telling the truth as telling other people off, instead of apologizing for your own mistakes first.
9. Saying negative things if someone says something good about someone you don't like.
10. Telling new people only the negative things about the workplace and other people.
11. Spending time thinking and talking about other people's past mistakes.
12. Spending encounters with other people watching for mistakes.
13. Rejecting offers of help with "Yes, but."
14. Rejecting people who are positive and constructive.
15. Saying that your own mistakes in communication and behavior are justified, because other people did something to you first.
16. Exaggerating bad news and minimizing or discounting the good news.
17. Using punishment words. Sarcasm. Wounding others.
18. Trying to convince other people how bad things are.
19. Distorting meaning through negative filters.

*What is your score?  
How would others score you?*

# Authors Who Have Influenced My Thinking about Community

Hannah Arendt  
C. George Benello  
Martin Buber, *I and Thou*  
Claire Raines and Lara Ewing. *The Art of Connecting*  
Roger Fisher  
Viktor E. Frankl  
John Gall. *Systemantics*  
John Gastil. *When Talk Works*  
Emma Goldman  
Paul Goodman  
Robert Greenleaf  
Ronald Gross  
Woody Guthrie. *Bound for Glory*  
Michael Henderson. *The Forgiveness Factor*  
Karl Hess  
Jane Jacob  
Irving Janis. *Groupthink*  
Arthur Koestler. *The God That Failed*  
Deborah Kolb. *When Talk Work*  
Doris Lessing. *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*  
Stanley Milgram. *Obedience to Authority*  
Czeslaw Milosz  
Arnold Mindel. *Sitting in the Fire*  
Ray Oldenburg. *The Great Good Place*  
Michael Polanyi. *Personal Knowledge*  
Karen Pryor. *Don't Shoot the Dog!*  
David B. Schwartz. *Who Cares? Rediscovering Community*  
Martin E. P. Seligman. *Learned Optimism and Authentic Happiness*  
Carolyn R. Shaffer and Kristin Anundsen. *Creating Community Anywhere*  
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Austin Tappan Wright. *Islandia*  
William Ury  
Malcolm X. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

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